

had happened. He exhibited no astonishment, and bade the caretaker accompany him to the room Piero had occupied.

It was a small room on the top floor, with two windows, one looking southwards, above the roof of the hall, towards Monte Bisnago; the other looking westwards, above the little hanging-garden, and across the long and narrow mirror of water that stretches from Gandria to San Salvatore. Both windows were open; the peace of the lake and of the mountains pervaded the empty room. A bag and an overcoat of Piero's were upon the chest of drawers, his walking-stick and umbrella stood in one corner, and Don Giuseppe's first exclamation was one of surprise.

"His things are all here!"

But on the writing-desk they found a letter with the following superscription:

*For you, Don Giuseppe, and may God reward you for all you have done for me.*

The bed had not been slept in, and Don Giuseppe asked the caretaker if he had heard any one go downstairs or open the outer door in the night. No, he had heard nothing. In fact at half-past seven the outer door had still been locked. But at half-past six Don Giuseppe had found the garden gate wide open. Piero must have gone that way. Don Giuseppe read his letter. It contained only the instructions Piero had promised him, the confirmation of what he had already told him, and a sealed envelope, bearing the words: *To be opened after Piero Maironi's death.* The note to the caretaker contained only an affectionate farewell, a few words of praise and of thanks, and the order to look upon Don Giuseppe Flores as his master. The caretaker, ignorant of all the circumstances, and utterly